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27 June 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Current Intelligence
THROUGH : Acting Chief, Far East Area
FROM : Chief, Indochina Division
SUBJECT : The Accuracy of MACV's Reporting on Infiltration and Order of Battle

Summary

After reexamining MACV's statistics and reports, CCI analysts have concluded that current MACV estimates on infiltration into South Vietnam and on Communist order of battle in the South can be used with confidence. ORR analysts concur in this view.

MACV's reporting on infiltration and enemy OB has steadily improved during the past two years as more prisoners, ralliers, and enemy documents have become available for exploitation. Procedures for measuring infiltration have also been revised and standardized. The data base on Communist infiltration built up by the South Vietnamese authorities in the 1950s and early 1960s has been examined and evaluated against information garnered by US officials. This early data base has been refined and is now considered relatively accurate.

On the specific question of the sharp rise reported in infiltration so far during 1966, CCI analysts believe this is clearly confirmed in the collateral data available here in Washington.

MACV's reporting on both OB and infiltration might serve Washington's needs better if the acceptance criteria were simplified. Some revisions are suggested in the text of this paper.

The Accuracy of Infiltration Reporting

1. MACV has been keeping records on the infiltration of personnel from North Vietnam to the South since 1959.

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Until two years ago, however, MACV relied heavily on South Vietnamese intelligence, much of which was haphazardly acquired and often improperly exploited. Within the last two years procedures for measuring infiltration have been revised and standardized in coordination with US advisers and the reliability of the official South Vietnamese studies has been markedly improved. In addition, MACV has established its own well staffed unit to examine information obtained from the interrogation of large numbers of captured prisoners, ralliers, and documents. Consequently, a rather good data base going back to 1959 has been established.

2. Between 1959 and 1964, DDI analysts generally felt that MACV's infiltration figures were on the conservative side. Since 1964, however, with the increasing involvement of US forces in combat operations and with improved procedures for the exploitation of available intelligence, MACV's estimates have become more timely and, we believe, are providing a reasonably accurate picture of the current situation.

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Improving Infiltration Reporting

4. Despite our overall satisfaction with MACV's infiltration reporting, there remains one area in which this reporting could be made more useful to Washington intelligence analysts. This would be to report infiltrating

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groups in two simplified categories rather than the present five rather complicated ones. MACV's five categories and the involved criteria which determine where an infiltrating unit fits into them are as follows:

Category 1: Infiltrating groups which have been confirmed by two or more sources.

Category 2: Groups "other than category 1, derived from the statements of captives, the major portion of which is confirmed by other sources."

Category 3: Groups "other than categories 1 and 2, derived from a statement of a captive who has been interrogated by the Military Interrogation Center of the National Interrogation Center and whose information is probably true but a major portion of which has not been confirmed by other sources."

Category 4: Groups derived from "other captive statements, for example corps interrogation reports."

Category 5: "Reported but not accepted." This recently introduced category includes reports judged by MACV to be too tenuous to be carried in any of the other four categories.

5. It is difficult to translate infiltration figures reported according to these complicated categories into meaningful language for consumers of national intelligence. It would be helpful if MACV would report infiltration under just two categories; "confirmed," and "reported." The confirmed would include the present categories 1 and 2, while all the rest would fall into the reported category. If the finished intelligence products of the DDI simply lump the field reporting into the above two categories without changes in field reporting, experience indicates that it will throw the DDI product out of phase with studies produced by DIA and other intelligence units with close service links to MACV.

Order of Battle

6. In general, MACV's order of battle holdings on Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units in South Vietnam appear to be accurate. At present MACV lists North

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Vietnamese strength in South Vietnam at approximately 38,000 and Viet Cong main force strength at some 63,000. MACV has made an effort in the last two years to make its criteria for the acceptance of Communist units more realistic. Previously the Washington intelligence community had believed that MACV's standards were too restrictive and consequently its order of battle figures were far too low. At present, we believe these figures are probably accurate. It should be noted, however, that there are doubtless additional Communist military units in South Vietnam not yet carried in the order of battle.

7. There are, for example, a number of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units which have been reported by prisoners, returnees, and in captured documents but not accepted in the order of battle because the evidence is insufficient to meet MACV's criteria. If the reports are accurate, and past experience suggests that many of them are, the total number of North Vietnamese troops now in South Vietnam would be well over 50,000 men instead of approximately 38,000 as is now carried by MACV. We agree with MACV, however, that these units should not be added to the order of battle until better evidence becomes available.

8. For the acceptance of units in the order of battle, MACV has established criteria separate from those used for confirming infiltration. We feel that the order of battle categories are also too complicated for easy use in Washington. There are currently four categories used in MACV order of battle reporting:

(a) Confirmed unit—one whose designation is known, subordination has been established, and location determined from a minimum of two reports from VC captives, returnees, or captured documents.

(b) Probable unit—one whose designation is known, subordination has been established and location determined from one VC captive, returnee, or captured document, when supported by information [redacted]

(c) Possible unit—repeated reports [redacted] indicate that the unit exists, even though no VC captives, returnees, or captured documents are available to verify the reports.

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(d) Reported unit--one whose designation has been mentioned in [] captured document, or interrogation report, but the available information is insufficient to include the unit in accepted OS holdings. As in the case of infiltration reports we feel it would be better for Washington analysts, if these categories were telescoped into two; confirmed and reported.

9. Another problem area in regard to MACV's order of battle reporting which should be noted is the question of the subtraction of Communist casualties from the order of battle figures. MACV does not reduce the order of battle until it receives a report of reduced strength from a prisoner from that unit or from a document. Since these sources are not always available, actual Communist strength on any given day may be several thousand less than MACV's figures show. Tactical commanders in Vietnam are aware of this fact and take it into consideration, but here in Washington this gap is often overlooked. There seems to be no good alternative to MACV's current method of counting casualties, since battlefield body counts are often unreliable. The order of battle, therefore, will have to continue to be read as a general strength figure rather than as a current and completely accurate statement of the number of Communist soldiers in South Vietnam.

10. One other difficulty which had existed in MACV's order of battle listing has now been at least partially overcome. Until a few months ago, MACV continued to carry units in its order of battle which had not been reported on for relatively long periods of time. However, MACV has now set up a new category for its order of battle, called the Lost Contact Category. This procedure allows MACV to draw attention to units which have not been verified or referred to as existing units by captured prisoners, returnees, or captured documents during a twelve month period. If reference or verification of the unit is not received within three months after being placed in this category, the unit is dropped from order of battle holdings.

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